

Garden visiting *Julie Plumb*

Quite a lot of the villages around here have open garden days or weekends. Much of the fun of these are, of course, the gardens themselves and the plants for sale, but there is also the quiet pleasure of watching the people who attend. Special types of fanatic are at the head of the queue as they open - here are a few of them.

First in are Jules and Sandy Gailigo-Gardening. Their immaculate garden at home is sometimes also open but here they are the other side of the fence. The stallholders love them - they are Dinkidos (dual income, no kids, dog owners) and are always willing to splash out big money for big, bold plants with 'presence' In no time at all they are filling the back of their SUV with wonderful huge specimens. At home they may squabble a bit about where to put them, but here they are united in their acquisitiveness.

Next are Ruby and Mary. They are sisters out for the day without their husbands. They giggle around in their floral frocks with hand knitted cardigans and high-heeled shoes. To be honest they find the plants a bit disappointing, as they were looking more for some nice bright bedding. For them the day will still be a big success as they are really here for the cream teas.

Then we have Lady Teensy-Alpine. She is the one who looks like a bag lady in her down at heel flat shoes and soiled tweed skirt set off with a big straw hat. She is peering suspiciously at the plants for sale and critically at those in the beds. She is the terror of these events as small pieces of plant and even whole pots from the for sale stalls fall mysteriously unobserved into her huge brown handbag. She will tackle the hapless garden owners ruthlessly about poor labelling or worse, failure to be up to date with nomenclature changes. It is rumoured that she is immensely rich but she always demands a pensioner's concession on the admission rate and haggles over the plant prices. What she is really after is a 'treasure' which no one else had noticed was a rarity and if she spots one she is quite capable of stealing it.

Finally, who is this scruffy person? Her spectacles are askew, her hair is coming down from its fastening and her shirt is untucked from her slightly grubby jeans. She is clutching a large carrier bag overflowing with purchases and accompanied by a bored looking mongrel. (The dog's expression clearly says that plant sales are a real pain but she wouldn't mind an ice cream.) Oh dear, I fear it is one of those mirrors designed to improve the perspective of the garden...

Julie gardens in Suffolk. This piece reproduced with kind permission from our correspondence group newsletter. To join, please see page 51.